

OPTIMIZE YOUR PRESS RELEASE FOR
**FRUITFUL
RESULTS**



OPTIMIZED PRESS RELEASES

What is an optimized press release?

An [optimized press release](#) is similar to a [traditional release](#). It contains news-worthy and buzz-worthy information that you want to convey to your audience. It includes a strong and catchy headline, a summary, and an introductory paragraph. Like a traditional press release, you can also include quotes and references.

Unlike a traditional release, optimized releases can include [hyperlinks](#), images, and videos, and are often edited to include “keywords” to help search engines find and index the releases.

The object of this toolkit is to teach you how to take your traditional press release and transform it into an optimized release and then distribute it online.

DEFINITION		
Optimized Press Release	=	Traditional Press Release + Keyword Research + Hyperlinks + Online Distribution

TIPS

- Looking to get more information about any of these topics? Refer to the “[Tutorial](#)” section.
- If you need help with a specific word, check the [Glossary](#) for definitions.

Why is it important to optimize releases and distribute them online?

The Internet is growing. More and more, people are getting their news online. Almost 40 percent of people get their news online on a regular basis, compared to 13 percent 10 years ago. That means that if you want people to find your news, you should make sure it is online.

Optimizing your release will help to make sure that people who are looking online for your news can find it.

How do I start?

In the following pages, we will discuss several basic steps you can take to optimize a press release. We also provide an example. Should you wish to explore these steps in more depth, we encourage you to read this information and then review the quick tutorial that follows, which will shed even more light for you on the subject of optimized press releases and what is entailed in order to perform each step.

FAST FACT: Almost 40 percent of people get their news online on a regular basis.



STEP 1

USE KEYWORD RESEARCH

Think of [keyword research](#) as “the psychology of search.” When Internet users search for information using search engines, they are asking for specific information. Therefore, you want to use “key” language in your press release.

For instance, if you are writing about conjunctivitis, but everyone is searching online for “pink eye,” they may never find your information— even if it is exactly what they want!

FNS has developed some keywords that pertain to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. They are available for you to use [here](#).

You may want to build on this work by doing your own research. Performing keyword research lets you learn the words and phrases that online searchers use most often to look for your subject matter. Visit the “[Tutorial](#)” section to learn how to conduct your own keyword research and to obtain a list of online tools you can use.

STEP 2

MODIFY THE TRADITIONAL RELEASE FOR THE ONLINE AUDIENCE

After you compile key research terms used by your Internet audience, you can identify the ideal wording to use in your release. You should insert this word or phrase into your release as much as possible.

While you want to insert your one keyword or key phrase as often as possible, there are a few areas that are more important than others when optimizing a release. These are the areas that the search engine sees as more important and uses to determine what your release is about. The key areas are:

- Headline
- Summary or subhead
- First paragraph (or first 250 words)
- Hyperlinks (covered in depth on page [J10](#))

STEP 3

INSERT HYPERLINKS

[Hyperlinks](#) should be placed where you think your reader would want more information. Often, it makes sense to hyperlink the name of your organization to your Web site the first time your organization’s name appears in the release. Other than that, the placement is up to you. It is better to concentrate the bulk of your URLs towards the beginning of the release.

TIP

- You want to include your keyword or key phrase about 5 times for every 100 words — but in real terms that is very hard to do. It is always more important to make sure your release reads well.



Internet users expect that you will include hyperlinks in your release, but you should also spell out the Web address of your main site, in case someone prints your release. One place you can include the full Web site address is at the end of your release or in your organization's boiler plate.

For more information on hyperlinks and why they are important to include in online press releases, visit the "[Tutorial](#)" section.

STEP 4 | SELECT AN ONLINE SERVICE TO DISTRIBUTE YOUR OPTIMIZED RELEASE

You will need to choose an online service to distribute your release. There are many online vendors that can distribute your release, with different features and different prices. Therefore, you should choose the service that fits your budget and also meets your distribution needs. Some services are much more expensive, but will distribute your release to traditional wire services and online channels, such as Yahoo! News. Other options are free, but do not distribute your release to anyone. Instead, these services rely on you to send the release URL to your media and other contacts.

Some Optimized Release Distribution Options

- PRWeb www.prweb.com
- MultiVu <http://www.multivu.com/>
- EON <http://eon.businesswire.com/portal/site/eon/>
- PitchEngine <http://www.pitchengine.com/>
- MarketWire <http://www.marketwire.com/>

For more information on how to choose which online service is right for your release and your organization, visit the "[Tutorial](#)" section.

STEP 5 | MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS

Unlike traditional wire services, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. However, many online distribution services will provide the number of people who read or download the release directly from their Web site.

For additional recommendations on how to evaluate the relative success of your release, please see the "[Tutorial](#)" section.

TIPS

- Don't use too many URLs in one sentence or short paragraph — it can make your text difficult to read and can be distracting.
- You should use no more than 1 hyperlink per 100 words of your release. So, if your release is 525 words long, you should include no more than 5 hyperlinks.



OPTIMIZING A RELEASE: AN EXAMPLE

In this section, you can see how an actual traditional release was optimized and then distributed online. In this example certain vendors and products were used, but for your release some tools may be more applicable and appropriate than others.

The Traditional Release



The above example of a traditional release might look familiar to you. When you begin to work towards distributing an online release, the first step is to review your traditional release and identify the key subject areas. You should also compile a list of what you think people who are looking for this type of information would type into an Internet search engine.

For the above example, some of the key concepts and ideas were: food stamps, SNAP, USDA, FNS, food, nutrition, Farm Bill, food assistance, EBT, etc.

Conducting Keyword Research

Next, using an online keyword research tool (for this example Keyword Discovery is used), look up all the concepts you thought of in step one. Keep track of how the terms compare to each other. For instance, in the previous example, we found that “apply for food stamps” is used almost three times more often than “applying for food stamps.”

Your goal is to come up with one phrase or word that is the central subject matter of your release, and which is the most searched-for way of describing that subject. So, if the release were all about applying for food stamps, your key phrase would be “apply for food stamps.”



Select	Query	Searches
<input type="checkbox"/>	nutrition	19,768
<input type="checkbox"/>	usda	11,145
<input type="checkbox"/>	food stamps	6,255
<input type="checkbox"/>	hunger	1,931
<input type="checkbox"/>	nutrition facts	1,554
<input type="checkbox"/>	food nutrition	1,410
<input type="checkbox"/>	diet nutrition	1,299
<input type="checkbox"/>	foodstamps	1,294
<input type="checkbox"/>	ebt	1,276
<input type="checkbox"/>	food stamp	654

In what follows, you can see how often some terms are searched for compared to other terms. “Nutrition,” “USDA,” and “food stamps” are the top three.

“Nutrition” is searched for the most of all the terms. However, people who type “nutrition” into a search engine could be searching for a variety of things. Try typing “nutrition” into Google – the top results are nutritional guides filed with calorie information and healthy eating

tips. It will not hurt to include the word “nutrition” in the release, but it should not be the main keyword, especially because “USDA” and “food stamps” are really much more relevant to this particular release.

Looking at the [traditional release](#), you should find places in the key areas (headline, summary, and first paragraph) to insert these words. Remember, keeping your release readable and interesting is always the priority!

Insert Hyperlinks

We stressed earlier how important it is to include hyperlinks in a release. The next step is to decide where you want to hyperlink to.

For the press release on the next page, the choices were fairly obvious. The release is about the name change of the Food Stamp Program to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), so you want to drive people to the landing page for that program. Secondly, we wanted to link to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service homepage so people can also learn more broadly about the available programs.

Ideally, you should insert your hyperlinks into the body of your press release and ensure that the text in the hyperlink includes some of your keywords. It is also a good idea to include hyperlinks early in your release both for the benefit of search engines and also so that people will see the links even if they do not scroll through your entire release.

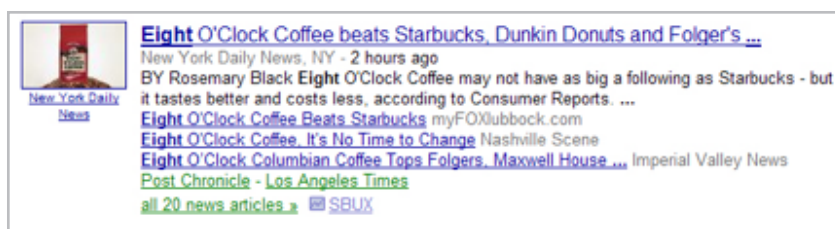
Add Assets and Tag Your Release

One of the most notable features of online optimized press releases is that they can include logos, images, attached files, and video. It is always a good idea to include at least one image or logo if you can – it will make your release stand out more in the search engine results.

TIPS

- Spelling out acronyms is always a good idea. In this case, many people are not yet familiar with the new Federal Food Stamp Program name—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The full name of SNAP also happens to include “Nutrition,” which is a very highly searched for word.
- In the case of SNAP, it is also helpful to use “food stamps” somewhere in your release because “food stamps” is still very much in people’s minds and is very likely to be searched for. Over time, as SNAP becomes more familiar to the public, this may change.
- In general, for online releases, your headline should be about 22 words, your summary or subhead should be about 2 sentences, and your release should be about 1,000 words. These lengths are ideal for search engines, and also reflect online consumers’ short attention span.





Example: Images displayed alongside news results on a search engine results page

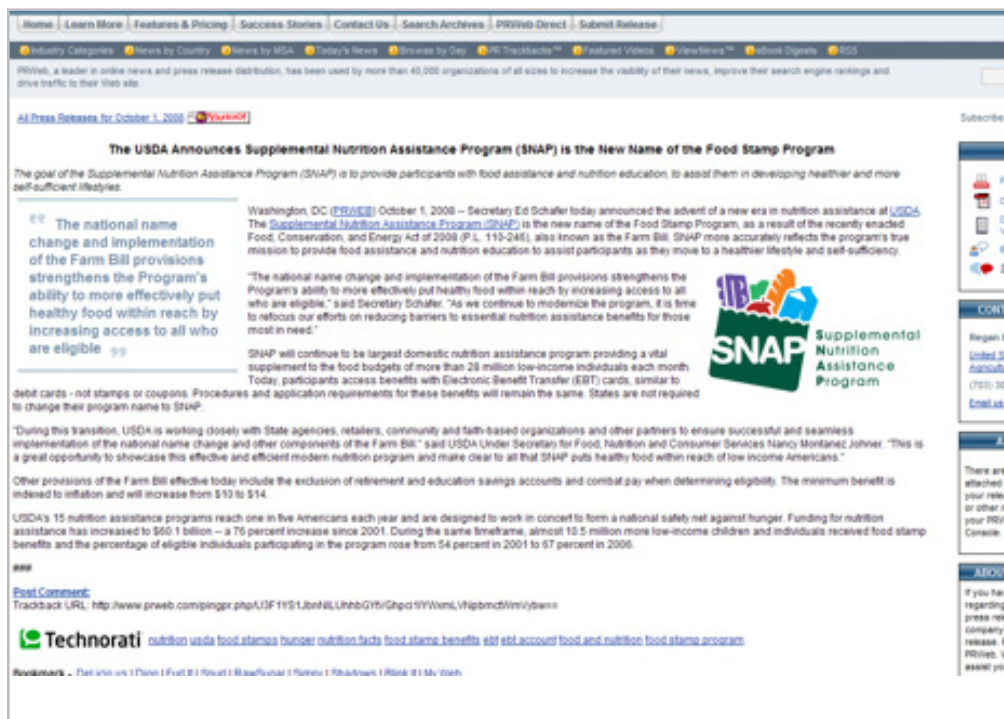
In addition to making your release stand out more in search engine results, adding assets to your release increases the depth of your offering — you have turned your press release into a complete package.

Depending on the vendor you choose to use, you may also be given the option to add “tags” or a “list of keywords” to your release. These are mechanisms to help people find and share your release. Use words from your keyword research for these fields.

Review the Final Product and Distribute

Of course you always want to review a release before you distribute it — as it is better to be safe than sorry. With some online release vendors, you can update the version of the release that resides on the vendor’s site, but you can’t update what has already been distributed to the media or any of the service’s subscribers.

Following is a screen shot of what the optimized version of the SNAP release looked like when it was distributed online.



TUTORIAL

OPTIMIZED PRESS RELEASES: THE BASICS

What are some differences between the optimized and traditional press releases?

An optimized release is often shorter than a [traditional release](#). The optimized release has been adapted for Internet use and is easier to find by search engines. The optimized releases are written to include key search words. These key search words are words used by your audiences.

An optimized release often includes video, images, and other documents such as research papers or presentations.

Lastly, an optimized release is typically distributed by online press release distribution services, rather than by you. These services specifically target online media channels, such as Google News, Yahoo! News, and other news outlets.

What are some benefits to using an optimized press release?

Benefits include your ability to:

- Distribute your news directly to consumers in addition to media
- Use hyperlinks that will drive people to your Web site
- Use video, photos, or logos
- Enable audiences to download materials
- Take advantage of tools such as “[social bookmarking](#)” and “[tagging](#)” to allow people to easily share your news with others
- Increase traffic (Internet visitors) to your Web site
- Drive your audience to a particular location on the Internet (a specific page, for example)
- Increase the online visibility and awareness of your organization or event
- Raise the visibility of your Web page on search engine results pages

My traditional press releases already show up online, so why should I optimize a release?

People who are getting their news online use [search engines](#). The majority of online searches are done through Google. There are other popular search engines as well, including Yahoo! and MSN.

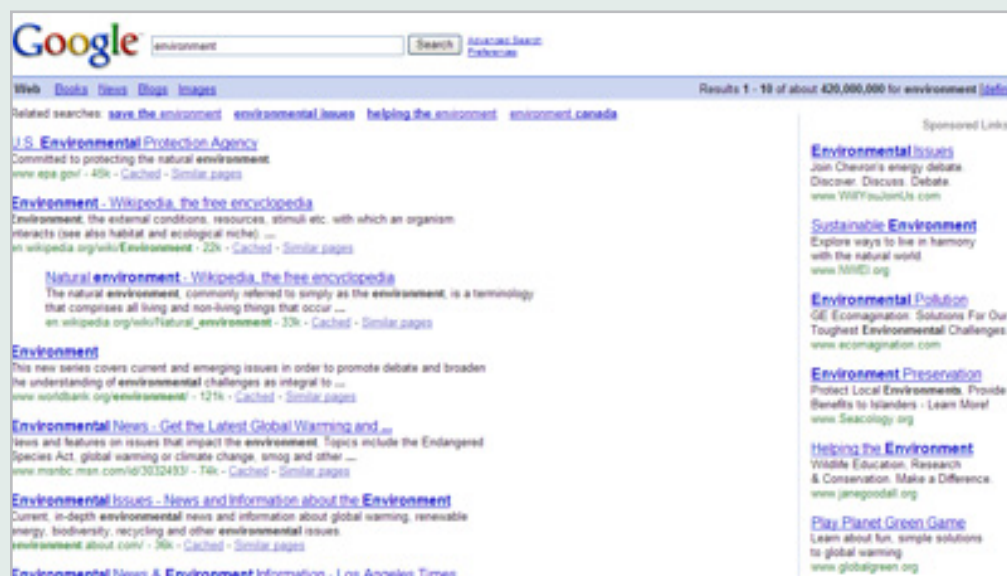
FAST FACT: Over 60 percent of online searches use Google.



Search engines are important because you want your news to be easily found and indexed. Search engine optimization (often referred to as “SEO”) is the process that helps organize the information on a Web page to make it most easily found and recorded by search engines. Optimizing your release for search engines will make sure your information is getting to the people who are searching for it.

When I search for something using a search engine, different results appear in different areas of the page. What are the different sections, and what do they mean?

You often see two types of results when you search for something using an Internet search engine like Google. One result is called “Paid Search” or “Sponsored Links.” These are often on the right side of the screen, but can also appear at the top or bottom. Regardless of where they appear, they will always be labeled as “Sponsored Links” or highlighted with different colors. Think of these as advertisements. Someone is paying money to display an ad to people who search for particular content online. This can be a very powerful tool, but not one covered in this toolkit.



The other type of result is called “Natural Search Results” or “Organic Search Results.” These results are ranked by the search engines based on a variety of factors and cannot be bought. The closer to the top of the list a result or “hit” is, the more relevant and valuable the result is to the string of words you used to search by. The goal of search engine optimization is to get your information at or near the top of the list.



KEYWORD RESEARCH

FNS has provided a basic list of relevant keyword research results, but you may wish or need to supplement these results with additional research of your own. To do so, follow the steps below:

- 1** | Deciding what the main subject areas are in your release.
- 2** | Think of other ways to say those same ideas and make a list.
- 3** | Using an online tool (see options in the sidebar), look up each word or phrase on your list.
- 4** | Keep track of how often each term is searched for. Organize your list from most-searched-for to least-searched-for.
- 5** | Choose the keywords that are both descriptive of your content and most popular according to the keyword research tools.

Free Online Keyword Research Tools:

- Keyword Discovery <http://keyworddiscovery.com/search.html>
- Google Keyword Tool <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>
- Word Tracker <http://www.wordtracker.com/>

Why do I need to use a tool to tell me which words to use?

The way people search for information online is not always intuitive. For instance, “applying for food stamps,” “food stamp application,” and “apply for food stamps” are three phrases with almost identical meanings. In any traditional press release, you might use all three interchangeably.

However, keyword data from an online tool will tell you that “apply for food stamps” is used almost three times more often than “applying for food stamps.”

The numbers in the “Total” column represent how often the term was searched for from a 10-percent sample of search engines over the last 12 months. Use the numbers to choose one term over another, but do not get hung up on the numbers themselves.

Query: food stamps	
Results 1 - 100 of 5964	Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Search Term	Total
food stamps	6225
apply for food stamps	612
florida food stamps	514
food stamps application	248
texas food stamps	238
applying for food stamps	223
food stamps florida	211
indiana food stamps	204
texas department of human services food stamps	193
apply for food stamps online	180
emergency food stamps	145
how to apply for food stamps	144
food stamps eligibility	125
application for food stamps	122
alabama food stamps	116
michigan food stamps	88
ebt food stamps	83
access florida food stamps	80
louisiana food stamps	78
how to get food stamps	75
california food stamps	74

Example: Searching “food stamps”
Keyword Discovery



HYPERLINKS

What is a hyperlink?

A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that you can click on to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all Web pages, and let you click from page to page. Text hyperlinks are often blue and underlined, but don't have to be. Hyperlinks are often called just “links.”

Example: Clicking [here](http://www.fns.usda.gov) will take you to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service home page is an example of a hyperlink. Clicking on the blue text, or “hypertext,” will take you to a destination URL, in this case <http://www.fns.usda.gov>.

Why should I include hyperlinks in my online press release?

It is critical to include hyperlinks in your online release. Not doing so is a huge missed opportunity. Hyperlinks are important because they:

- Lead readers of your release to your Web site; and
- Count as objective votes for your Web site in the eyes of search engines.

Leading readers of your release to your Web site is important if you want to increase traffic to your site, where they can gather more information and ideally become repeat visitors, as they learn to view your site as an authority.

The second point is equally important to accomplishing the goals of an optimized release. As your press release is picked up by other Web sites, the release will include the hyperlinks you've inserted. Search engines look at these hyperlinks very favorably, and having many hyperlinks pointing to your site helps your site rank higher in search engines.



CHOOSING A SERVICE

There are many services that will distribute your release online at various price levels. These companies also have customer service representatives who can help you determine which service is right for you and answer any questions you might have. Here are some additional factors you should consider when choosing a service to use.

Things To Consider

1 | BILINGUAL OR LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Not all vendors offer the same services. Some have very sophisticated translation and targeting options, while others have no distribution for languages other than English, although they will post the release on their site. Make sure to ask questions before selecting your service if other languages are a consideration.

2 | USE OF IMAGES, VIDEO, OR LOGOS

Most optimized release vendors let you include images and logos. Most will also let you include video — some simply require that the video is hosted on YouTube.com, while others need the actual video file to be uploaded. If a video is important, check to see which vendors include video in their fees.

3 | MEASUREMENTS

There are different levels of metrics and reporting after your release has been distributed. To learn more about ways you can supplement metrics that your release service provides, see the “[Tutorial](#)” section.

4 | EXTRA FEATURES

Many services provide the option to attach downloadable files, “[tags](#),” and “[social bookmarks](#).” Tags and social bookmarks are Web 2.0 methods to flag what your release is about and make it easy to find and share.



What are the main differences between using a traditional wire service and an online optimized release service?

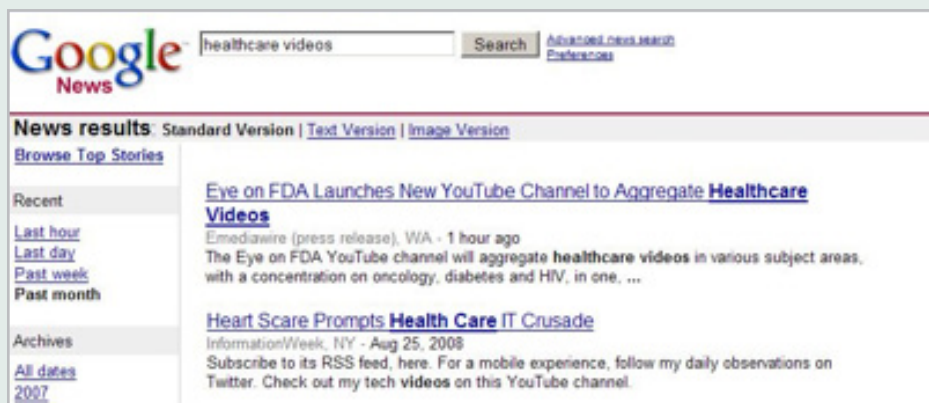
Where the release is distributed is one big difference — an online release should be more targeted to online news portals, online news search engines, and social media tools. This means that it is targeting the online news consumer and, in many cases, can reach the end user without ever being “picked up” (i.e., sought out by the media) in the traditional sense.

Depending on the service you use, the actual uploading and submission of the release may be different or similar to the experience you are used to from traditional wire services.

Optimized releases are also displayed alongside news stories in many news search engines — allowing you to control the headline, summary, and often the image associated with the search engine result. This control is crucial as more and more people find their news online. Search engine results pages are an increasingly significant opportunity to grab consumers.

In the screen capture that follows from Google News, the first result is an online optimized press release and the second result is a news story from InformationWeek. In the first example, whoever issues the press release has control over the headline and first sentence. If this release had included an image, this image would most likely have also been displayed.

In the second example, someone from InformationWeek determined what the headline and introductory sentence would be.



Example: Healthcare Videos: Optimized Release vs. News Article



MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

Unlike traditional wire services, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. However, many online distribution services will provide the number of people who read or downloaded the release directly from their Web site.

Depending on your goal in distributing your release online, there are different steps you can take to measure how your release performed. Some suggestions are below.

GOAL: Distribute the content of your release to news outlets

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: As mentioned, unlike traditional wire services you may be familiar with, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. To measure how many online news outlets have picked up your release, try using a [search engine](#) to search for the title of your release a few days after it was sent. Two popular search engines that can be used for this include Google (www.google.com) and Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com). Important: Check the related news search engines such as news.google.com and news.yahoo.com.

In addition to searching for the title of your release, you can also search for your organization name, the name of the event or speaker you are promoting, and the central topic of your release to see if the content of the release was picked up by an outlet without the full body and title of the release.

GOAL: Distribute the content of your release to partners (in addition to news outlets)

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: Using a similar process as described above, you can also see how many blogs pick up your release. The term “blog” is short for “weblog,” and is a Web site that displays in chronological order the postings by one or more individuals. Blogs can be written by journalists, but are often written by the general public. Some blogs are read by many people, while others are read by fewer people.

You can search for your release using one of the many blog searching tools including:

- Google Blog Search <http://blogsearch.google.com/>
- Technorati <http://technorati.com/>
- IceRocket <http://www.icerocket.com/>

Technorati has a system called “Authority” to tell you how important and relevant they have determined different blogs to be. The higher a blog’s authority number, the more people are reading and linking to that particular blog.

GOAL: Increase traffic (Internet visitors) to your Web site

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: To determine whether an online release has increased traffic to your Web site, you will need access to the traffic logs of your Web site. The person or organization who administers your Web site should be able to grant you access to these or pull information for you. You can either look for an overall increase in the number of visitors to your site in the time following the distribution of your release, or you can try to dig a bit deeper.

Most Web traffic logs should be able to tell you “Referrers” or “Referrals” to your site. This is a way of finding out where visitors to your site are coming from. If you use ABC Press Releases to distribute your release, the URL of your release will begin with www.ABCPressReleases.com, or a similar standard domain name. This allows you to search for your “Referrers” or “Referrals,” which shows how many people came from that domain name, and how many clicked through from your release.



Similarly, if you know your release was picked up by www.BestNewsSource.com, you can search for that domain in your “Referrals” or “Referrers” to find out how many people came to your site from that location.

GOAL: Drive your audience to a particular location on the Internet (a specific page, for example)

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: You can use the same measurements as above, especially if overall traffic to your Web site has increased. If it has, and you included the specific URL you wanted people to visit, then it is likely that people were visiting that page. Most Web analytic programs will also provide you with statistics on the most popular pages on your site, which can also tell you how many people are visiting a particular page.

If the Web page you drove people to included a survey, registration for an event, or downloadable resources, you can also look for an increase in interaction with those features.

GOAL: Increase the online visibility and awareness of your organization, news, or event

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: Search for your release on the major search engines, as well as the portion of their search engines specifically dedicated to news.

You can also search for the [keyword](#) or phrase you optimized your release for. When you type a keyword or phrase into the news searches in the immediate day or so following the distribution of your release, your release should be returned high up on the page.

Think of this as basically a billboard for your organization – even if people don’t click through to your release, they have seen your headline and in most cases your subhead or summary, and sometimes even an image or logo.

GOAL: Help increase the position of your Web page on search engine results pages

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: This one takes longer to achieve than the others, but issuing optimized online releases with hyperlinks to your Web site is one very important element of increasing the position of your Web site on the search engine results page.

To illustrate the importance of improving your Web site’s position: 80 percent of Internet traffic begins at a search engine, according to Harris Interactive.

Getting your Web site to rank highly in search engines can take a very long time, but is worth the effort. For example, 70 percent of people will click on something on the first results page of a search engine – that is to say, on one of the first 10 results. The numbers drop significantly from there. Approximately 15 percent of people will click on the second page or results 11-20. Finally, people will click on results 21-30 on the third page only about 10 percent of the time.

SEARCH ENGINE RESULTS	CLICKS
Page 1	70%
Page 2	15%
Page 3	10%
Page 4+	5%

GOAL: Create a multimedia release that can live online and include video, photos, or downloadable resources

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS: This is more straightforward than the others. Did you include video and images in your release or downloadable materials such as white papers or presentations? If so, you have created a multimedia release. With many online optimized release services, you can update the release over time to include new images or a video from an event. This means that you can send the release URL to any contacts you have and they will have instant access to not only the text of your release, but also any additional resources you want to provide to them.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Anchor Text

Anchor text is the part of the hyperlink that you see when you are reading a Web page, email, or document. For instance in the example [Food & Nutrition Service Home Page](#), the words “Food & Nutrition Service Home Page” are the anchor text. Anchor text is analyzed by search engines, so it is important to use relevant keywords in your hyperlinks when possible.

Hyperlink

A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that you can click on to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all Web pages, allowing users to click their way from page to page. Text hyperlinks are often blue and underlined, but don't have to be.

Keyword (or Key Phrase)

The one word or key phrase that is the most searched for and represents the central point of your release. You want to find the right term to use for your subject matter, so that people who are searching for relevant information online will find your content.

Keyword Research

Keyword research is the practice of researching keywords (terms) relevant to your Web site or online content and determining which are actually searched upon by search engine users to find information.

Metadata

Broadly, metadata, or meta data, is data about data. In terms of the Web and search engine optimization, metadata is descriptive text that you add to the code of a Web page to help search engines identify and index the content of that page. The three most common types of metadata on a Web page are the Title, the Description and the Keywords. While the keywords and description do not appear on the actual Web page, the Title is what shows up in the top bar of your browser when you are on a Web page, such as Food & Nutrition Service Home Page on <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>. All three areas should include keywords determined through keyword research.

Optimized Press Release

An optimized press release conveys news or information, like a traditional release does, but it also includes language that is optimized for search engines and hyperlinks to Web pages. Optimized releases are also distributed online.



Organic Search

Also referred to as ‘Natural Search,’ organic search is the opposite of paid search and search engine marketing. Organic search engine results are ranked by the search engines based on a variety of factors and cannot be bought. The closer to the top of the list a result or “hit” is, the more relevant and valuable the result is to the string of words you used to search by. By utilizing search engine optimization, over time, an organization’s information can improve its organic search results, and appear at or near the top of the list.

Paid Search

Paid search, or search engine marketing, is basically purchasing ads associated with keywords. This is the opposite of organic search. You will often see paid search ads on the search engine results page along with the organically derived search results.

Search Engine Crawler

A search engine crawler (also known as a Web spider, Web crawler or Web robot) is a program run by search engines that browses the Web in a methodical, automated manner and indexes content for the engine.

Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing (SEM) is the practice of paying a search engine to run ads associated with keywords. These are the ads that you see on a search engine results page.

Social Bookmarking

Social bookmarking is a method for Internet users to store, organize, search, and manage bookmarks of Web pages on the Internet with the help of metadata. In a social bookmarking system, users save links to Web pages that they want to remember and/or share.

Technorati Tags

Technorati tags are labels that people use to make it easier to find blog posts, photos, and videos that are related on the popular blog search engine Technorati (www.technorati.com).

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